

## Paratransit Advisory Committee

May 19, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Fr. James Bradley, Tom Coppola, Lyudmila Demikhovskya, David H. DePorte, Ellen Rubin, Mindy Jacobsen, Miriam Kimmelman, John Moynihan, Jean Ryan, Ken Stewart, Stephanie L. White,

Absent: Monica Miroxian and Stan Weinblatt

NYC Transit Staff Present: Brandon Anderson, Tom Charles, Tom Chin, Michael Cosgrove, Lynda Edmond, Donna Fredericksen, Eddie Griffith, Pat Ibarguen, Denise Ann McQuade, Cassandra Lubin-Richards, Bobby Samuel, Russell Schmid, Ken Stuart

Guests: Frank Camp, Global Contact Services, Quemuel Arroyo, DOT

Denise McQuade – Announced that Monica Miroxian and Stan Weinblatt were both ill and we would be approving the January 20, 2015 Notes, not the March 17, 2015 Notes because they were still being prepared.

### I. Approval of Minutes – Vice President Thomas Charles

Ken Stewart moved that the January 20, 2015 Notes be approved and Mindy Jacobsen seconded the motion. The Notes were unanimously approved.

### II. AAR Service Report – Vice President Thomas Charles

The Vice President noted that the extreme weather in January, February and March affected service.

Customers found eligible for feeder service can choose not to accept Access-A-Ride (AAR) service to the nearest bus stop. AAR does not take customers to the nearest subway at this time.

There has been a decrease in registrants who are conditionally eligible. The Vice President believes that this has partly occurred due to the

introduction of feeder trip itineraries. It is now expected that the percentage of conditionally eligible customers will remain constant.

The Vice President reviewed highlights of February 2015 versus February 2014 statistics.

- Registrants declined from 158,089 in February 2014 to 137,456 in February 2015.
- Trips completed increased from 448,028 in February 2014 to 462,191 in February 2015.
- On-time Performance increased slightly from 88.0% in February 2014 to 89.8% in February 2015.
- Total No-Shows decreased from 13,951 in February 2014 to 12,650 in February 2015.
- On-time performance based on appointments increased from 78.0% in February 2014 to 82.0% in February 2015.
- Average reservation answering speed was 35 seconds in February 2014 and 50 seconds in February 2015.
- Average reservation talk time was 4 mins. 15 secs. in February 2014 compared to 4 mins. 28 secs. in February 2015.
- Average answering speed for Transit Services was 1 min. 7 secs. in February 2014 compared to 35 secs. in February 2015.
- Average Travel Services talk time was 2 mins. 09 secs. in February 2014 compared to 2 mins. 19 secs. in February 2015.
- Complaints were 2,239 in February 2014 and 2,598 in February 2015, a 16% increase.
- There were 3.6 complaints per thousand boardings in February 2014 and 4.1 in February 2015, a 12.7% increase. Ken Stuart noted that

AAR is looking at the increase in complaints and addressing the most serious allegations first (e.g., safety related).

- Total Boardings were 613,793 in February 2014 and 631,880 in February 2015, a .29% increase.
- Commendations were 386 in February 2014 and 421 in February 2015.
- The Vice President clarified that answering speeds improved as the weather improved and total boardings includes AAR customers, guests, and PCAs.

### III. Paratransit Topic – Vice President Thomas Charles

The Vice President reported on the April 23, 2015 New York City Council Hearing where testimony was given by the Vice President.

Among the items covered during that testimony were a description of AAR service and key operating statistics. AAR provides 26,000 rides a day and 90% are on time. We provide 6.6 million trips a year and use complaints to improve service. The Fiscal crisis of 2010-12 is still affecting us and AAR is waiting for Capital Budget monies to upgrade key systems such as AVLM.

The City Council called for improved transparency concerning the Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC). Specific inquiries were made regarding the composition of the PAC, who the PAC members represent, their organizational affiliations and borough of residence. The City Council further inquired about the PAC's guidelines, requirements for serving on the PAC and PAC meeting minutes.

The New York City Council asked that we:

1. Publicize PAC meeting details
2. Include how to Apply for PAC membership
3. Post PAC meeting minutes
4. Provide a mechanism for customers to give feedback prior to meeting
5. Publicize PAC bylaws

There was general discussion by the PAC membership that they require the opportunity to review and approve the minutes prior to their being made public. Approval of minutes will be voted on at the subsequent meeting.

Member Jean Ryan spoke against public meetings based upon the negative experience PAC members had when public meetings were attempted in the past. There was a general agreement that public meetings were not practical.

The Vice President further reported that in response to litigation concerning the need for improved communication access for English-limited Paratransit customers, we now provide written materials in Spanish, Russian, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Korean and Haitian Creole. In addition, we have a language line that can accommodate these and 150 plus other languages.

The Vice President commented on questions raised concerning the eligibility process which has been reviewed by the FTA. The FTA required one change to the process with which AAR has complied. Letters sent to applicants informing them that they were found to be ineligible for AAR service are now more specific on what was observed and that prompted the determination.

The Vice President reported on the meeting with South Brooklyn Councilman Chaim Deutsch. The overall quality and lack of improvement in Broker Service is cause for concern. This is being communicated with the brokers and the reliance on broker-provided service is being reduced until such time as improvements are demonstrated on the part of the brokers.

Quemuel Arroyo, DOT, commented that UBER asks customers to rate driver service. Drivers who receive a low rating can be kicked off service; also, drivers can refuse to take a nasty customer.

Work continues with the NYCTLC concerning the increased availability of yellow and green taxis which are regulated. The TLC has put out a request for proposals for centralizing the dispatching of yellow or green taxis to meet customers and take them to their destination. In addition, yellow and

green taxi drivers will have to take compliance training and meet quality of service standards.

#### IV. Paratransit Driver Training – Membership Item

PAC members had offered to provide sensitivity training to AAR drivers and it was suggested that PAC members participate in regularly scheduled Performance and Evaluation (P&E) Classes. Members began to attend P&E classes given for AAR vehicle operators.

Stephanie White spoke about her participation in the P&E class. She stressed the relationship between drivers and customers and how they need each other. She noted that the drivers are open to this concept and receptive to their roles in helping fellow people. Ms. White stressed to the drivers that customers have different disabilities and need driver assistance to improve their quality of life. She said the class was educational and comprehensive.

Jean Ryan also attended a P&E session and, while she didn't have an opportunity to speak at the class on this occasion, she will participate in future classes.

The overall value of PAC representation at the P&E class was noted. Opportunities will be provided for PAC members to address future classes and member attendance will be rotated.

#### V. Member Feedback

The PAC proved feedback on AAR service based on their experiences and those of their constituents. Open dialog ensued.

- Vehicles  
There was general discussion of vehicles that might become part of the TLC fleet. Lyudmila Demikhovskya expressed concern that ambulette-style vehicles have a rear entrance and in order to be practical would require the vehicle to be backed into the sidewalk.

It was clarified that while AAR has diversified its fleet, large capacity vehicles such as the 5 & 2 vans [5 seats, 2 wheelchair positions] are still required for group trips and to assist in situations such as evacuations. AAR will continue to evaluate vehicle types and manufacturer's designs.

- **Web Site Accessibility**

Mindy Jacobsen stated she's heard the MTA website (MTA.info) is not easy to use to file a complaint for customers who are blind.

Ms. Jacobsen also indicated she's had the same experience.

Mr. Stuart stated Michael Levy will test and provide feedback to those responsible for the website.

- **Call Answer Time**

Miriam Kimmelman reported waiting a long time for the comment line (#8) to answer.

Mr. Stewart said he's experienced good responses when calling and typical answering time was 3 secs.

- **Travel Services**

Ms. Rubin noted that Travel Service Agents often are unable to get through to carrier dispatchers.

Ms. Kimmelman asked to speak with a Travel Services supervisor and was denied.

Ms. White said it is most frustrating having a Travel Services agent put you on hold immediately after answering the call.

- **On-time Performance**

Ms. Jacobsen said she had students whose pickups were late on April 16 and May 4. She said one student had a 3:45 pickup and was actually picked up at 6:15 pm.

Fr. Bradley said sometimes the vehicle arrives late, but most times is on time.

- GPS  
Fr. Bradley – There is a closed entrance, but GPS tells the driver to go to the wrong entrance.

Meeting adjourned 7 p.m.